

Past and present members of the U.S. Armed Forces deserve to have our full and continued support and we should not wait for another tragedy like the one at Pax River, to remind ourselves that our troops are in danger on a daily basis, whether in harm's way or preparing to go into conflict. The men and women of our armed services are defending this nation so that we may go about our daily lives feeling safe and protected. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in the Congress to ensure that we provide them with the latest and best weapons systems available and that we continue to recognize their hard work and honor the sacrifices they make on a daily basis.

ON BEHALF OF LORI BERENSON

HON. JOHN JOSEPH MOAKLEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, today I call for action on behalf of Lori Berenson. Tomorrow, Peruvian President Fujimori will be inaugurated for another term and President Clinton will most likely congratulate him and wish him success. But what our President should be doing is raising the issue of Lori's release. And our diplomats should be working on it every minute of every day.

This is an American citizen, Mr. Speaker—on of our own. As a result of a conviction by a secret military tribunal, Lori has toiled in a Peruvian jail for more than 4 years now, and has endured severe health effects as a result. Throughout this ordeal, Lori has maintained her absolute innocence. Numerous international human rights organizations, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States have all called for her release and pointed to widespread corruption in the Peruvian courts. But still, the United States has not taken the action necessary to obtain Lori's release.

Mr. Speaker, our nation has an excellent working relationship with the government of Peru. We cooperate on a wide range of issues together. The release of Lori should be one of those issues that is important to our nation. This is the time we must use the influence we've gained in Peru. It is time that President Clinton demands Lori's release at the highest levels it is time this nation stands up for Lori—it is time for Lori Berenson to come home.

THE HOME OWNERSHIP TAX CREDIT ACT: MAKING THE AMERICAN DREAM A REALITY FOR ALL AMERICANS

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the Home Ownership Tax Credit Act (HOTCA). This bill will help address a crisis in home ownership among low-income Americans.

The booming economy has helped boost the national home ownership rate to a record high level. However, home ownership among low-income households, minorities, women and families living in rural areas still lags behind. Although the national average of home ownership is 67%, only 45% of low-income families own their homes.

While present Federal policy promotes home ownership for higher income families by allowing taxpayers to deduct mortgage interest and real estate taxes, it does little to help low-income families achieve home ownership. The deductions of mortgage interest and real estate taxes benefit almost exclusively middle and upper-income Americans. In fact, only 10% of these tax benefits go to home owners who make less than \$40,000 a year. Rental assistance is available for poor families through a variety of federal subsidies (primarily HUD's Section 8 program), but there's little help for low to middle income families who want to make the transition from renters to home owners.

This legislation will lend a hand to our hard-working families so that they too can achieve home ownership. By leveraging private resources and without creating new programs or bureaucracies, this bill will help hundreds of thousand of families finally realize the American dream of home ownership.

This tax credit tackles the two leading obstacles of home ownership: affordability and lender risk. First, many low income families simply cannot afford the monthly mortgage payments and initial downpayment for even a modest home in their area. The home ownership tax credit addresses this "wealth hurdle" by offering interest-free second mortgages to the low-income buyer. This is critical because this second mortgage will reduce the buyer's down payment and monthly mortgage costs by as much as 30%.

Second, lenders are often reluctant to make so-called "risky" loans due to fear of foreclosures. By lowering the loan amount needed for the first mortgage, the home ownership tax credit reduces the risk for the lender.

Similar programs implemented in North Carolina and New York have already proven successful in increasing homeownership for low-income families and jump-starting formerly distressed neighborhoods. It's time we take this program nation-wide and help families throughout the country achieve the American dream of owning their own home.

I urge my colleagues to join me and co-sponsor the Home Ownership Tax Credit Act.

TREASURY AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 20, 2000

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4871) making appropriations for the Treasury Department, the United States Postal Service, the Execu-

tive Office of the President, and certain Independent Agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes.

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 4871, the FY 2001 treasury-postal appropriations bill.

I am pleased that the committee reported an appropriations bill that strongly supports law enforcement efforts in this country. Fully funding the administration's gun-law-enforcement initiatives, including a proposal to add 600 employees to the agency to more fully enforce existing gun laws, suggests that this Congress is finally getting serious about stopping the scourge of gun crimes that have crippled this nation.

I hope this is a sign of more to come in promoting public safety and preventing these senseless crimes by approving legislation on juvenile justice which has languished in a conference committee for over a year.

This bill also contains a provision that I strongly support which would roll back the 0.5% surcharge on federal employee retirement contributions. This increase was mandated by the 1997 balanced budget law and has disproportionately affected federal employees by taxing more of their gross income for retirement than their private sector counterparts contribute.

Just yesterday, the CBO announced that we will run in FY 2001 a surplus of over \$100 billion. Mr. Speaker, the budget is balanced: it is time to stop funding surpluses at the expense of our hard working federal employees.

While I support many of the priorities in this bill and commend the committee on a job well done in allocating finite resources, I remain concerned about one provision in this bill that suggest this Congress is not serious about holding the line on spending.

Mr. Chairman, about a decade ago, through legislative slight of hand, Congress passed a law to allow for the automatic annual increase in Members' salaries. This was a politically motivated move to shield Congress from casting embarrassing votes to increase their own pay. While we were technically afforded the opportunity to vote against an increase by casting a no vote on a procedural issue, the fact remains that by voting in support of this legislation, we will be voting for our own pay raises.

This will be a vote that comes at the expense of other mandates an earlier Congress created: Two years ago the House voted overwhelmingly for the IRS Reform and Restructuring Act which followed recommendations of a commission that studied the IRS and stated that IRS budgets "should receive stable funding for the next three years so that the leaders can . . . improve taxpayer service and compliance."

Mr. Chairman, this bill, contrary to the recommendations of a bipartisan commission and contrary to the will of this House, cuts \$465 million from the administration's request. If this Congress is serious about holding the line on spending, we would not hold our other priorities hostage to our desires of a larger paycheck.

I will be voting against this bill and I will be voting against a pay increase—I urge my colleagues to put their money where their mouth is and reject final passage of this legislation.